

The Three Little Pigs: a Tale of the 10th Kingdom

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"Mama, tell us a story!"

"Yes, Mama," Wolf begged, "please?"

"What kind of story do you want?"

"Tell us a scary one!" her four cubs demanded.

"Let me think." Mam Lobo sat in her rocker and put her hand to her chin. The children settled on the floor at her feet and she began . . .

We are told that one pig built his house of straw, and the hungry Big Bad Wolf blew it away. The truth is, Pig had gotten drunk on a hogshead of cider at the Peep Bar and been caught outdoors in a storm. He was in an open field when the rain and wind started. He burrowed into a small pile of straw for the night and called it a house. He was only trying to get out of the rain. Because of the cider he'd drunk, he could barely walk, let alone actually build a house.

Then the storm intensified, the wind blew, the rain was lashed about, thunder rumbled, and lightning split the sky. The pile of straw in the open field was blown from there to the Ninth Kingdom. When Pig awoke the next morning, he was cold and wet. He only remembered the pile of straw he had crawled into.

I'll just go see my brother, Pork Chop, he'll put me up for a few nights, Pig thought. I haven't seen him in quite awhile. Besides, he's quite a good cook and will feed me. With that thought, Pig wobbled toward the sty where his brother lived.

The wolf had nothing to do with the destruction of the pile of straw, and had never tried to eat the pig.

As Pig wobbled along the road to Pork Chop's home, holding a very sore head, he stumbled upon an old woman carrying a load of sticks.

"Where are you going, Grandmother Hood?" he asked the woman.

"I need to get these sticks home for my fire," she replied. "My granddaughter is coming to see me this afternoon and I must have the house nice and warm for her."

"Is it far from here?"

"No. Just over that rise in the road," she replied pointing with her chin.

Pig looked at the road and considered. Turning to the old lady, he said, "Grandmother, let me carry that heavy load of sticks for you. Your home is on the way to my brother's and I have time to help you."

"Why, thank you, Pig." The old lady dropped the load of wood from her shoulders and then helped the pig settle it on his. "I really do appreciate your help, young pig. These old bones just aren't what they used to be."

Together, they walked on to the woman's modest home. Once there, the old woman opened the front door, "Come in, Pig," she held the door for him. "The least I can do is offer you a bite to eat for your help."

Pig put the sticks in the hopper by the fireplace. "You are too kind, Grandmother. But, I can't refuse your hospitality."

He sat himself down at the table and waited while the old lady bustled about the kitchen getting him a bowl of bean stalk porridge.

"I'm afraid this is all I have," she said as she sat the steaming bowl before him.

"This is just fine, Grandmother," Pig replied. When the bowl was on the table before him, he grabbed up the spoon beside it and began shoveling the hot porridge into his mouth. He was such a messy eater that almost as much porridge landed on his chin as in his mouth.

When he had finished, Pig wiped his chin with the back of his hand. He then licked the residue off his hand then wiped the hand on his shirt. The shirt had obviously been used for this purpose many times in the past, it was impossible to tell what color it originally was. The stains from many meals -- and hogsheads of cider -- covered the front and sides of the poor garment.

"Thank you, that was really good, Grandmother. But I must be on my way to my brother's." Pig pushed back the chair and stood to leave. "Thank you for breakfast." With that, he was out the door as fast as he could waddle off.

At least the porridge made my head feel better, he thought. I should be able to get to Pork Chop's house before dinnertime. Pig stepped up the pace of his waddle as he considered the best way to sponge off his older brother for the next few weeks.

Pork Chop was working on his home, the storm the night before had knocked the sticks he'd used for construction flying around. It seemed as if most of it was now lying in his neighbor's sty. It had taken most of the morning to gather up the missing sticks and hammer them back into place. Pork Chop was beginning to think about dinner as he put the finishing touches on the roof patches. As the last nail went in, Pig hove into view.

"Damn!" he swore. "What does that lazy Pig want now?"

"Hello, Brother," Pig called as he reached the front of his older brother's house. He gazed up at Pork Chop who stood on a rickety ladder leaning against the house. "Looks like you had a bit of trouble with the storm last night, too."

"Think so?"

"So did I, as a matter of fact. Some huge wolf came along during it and blew my house completely away. Left me with no place to lay my poor head, he did."

"Is that so?"

"Yep." Pig looked around the yard for a moment, then, "Do you think I could stay with you while I get a new house built?"

Pork Chop sighed, This is what I was afraid of. "How long will it take?" He watched as Pig squirmed below him.

"Oh, only a few days," Pig finally said in a small voice.

"How few?"

"Only two or three."

Pork Chop sighed, "I guess, if you're sure you have nowhere else to go."

"Great. You're the best brother in the Nine Kingdoms."

"In the meantime, hold the ladder so I can get down?"

"Oh, sure." Pig quickly moved to stand by the ladder and hold it

steady for his brother.

When Pork Chop was safely on the ground, the two brothers entered his home. It was nearly lunchtime and Pork Chop had a pot of bean stalk porridge bubbling over the fire. He took one look at the saliva beginning to drip from Pig's mouth and asked, "Are you hungry, Pig?"

"Oh, not very."

Pork Chop sighed, "Help me set the table, and we can eat."

"Help? I'm your guest." That said, Pig plopped down in the nearest chair to wait for his brother to serve him lunch.

Pork Chop sighed -- he seemed to do a lot of that when Pig was around -- and divided the porridge into two bowls. He carried the bowls and two spoons to the table, he set one in front of his brother and carried the other to the head of the table where he sat to enjoy his meal. Both pigs ate like, well like pigs. Spilling as much of the porridge as they ate.

When the meal was done, Pig looked around the room and decided that he needed a nap after all the hard work of eating. And, of course all the walking and carrying he'd done that morning. He pushed himself away from the table, and struggled to get up and walk the seven or eight steps to the bed. Once there, he fell on top of the blankets and was snoring almost before his head hit the pillow.

Pork Chop looked at his brother in disgust, Not even an offer to help with the clean up. And his snoring will bring down my poor little house.

As the older brother gathered up the dirty dishes and began to wash them, he really began to feel put upon. The more put upon he felt, the louder his muttering became. "'Just two or three days,' he says. 'Help me,' he says. 'I'm your guest,' he says. Well, there are no free rides in this house. He'll pull his weight, or he'll get out."

Pig's snores had increased with each passing moment. Now they were shaking the little house of sticks. Fine dirt was filtering down from the ceiling and walls. A few minutes later, sticks were beginning to fall around the two pigs.

Pork Chop ran to the bed and began shaking Pig, "Wake up you imbecile! You're snoring my house down!"

Pig continued to snore as he slowly crawled upward from sleep. Finally, with a snore that did bring down the house, he woke up. Dazedly he looked around him. "What happened to your house, Pork Chop? Did some nasty wolf come and blow it down while I was asleep?"

"No, you idiot. You did."

"ME?"

"YES, YOU!!" Pork Chop was at his wit's end. "I spent all morning putting my home back together from the storm last night and now, now

you've blown it down again! What are you going to do about it?"

"Do?"

"Yes, do! What are you going to do about my house?"

"Well, it's not my fault you didn't build it strong enough to survive your poor younger brother's gentle snores."

"Gentle?! Your gentle snores?" Pork Chop's face was red from trying to hold in his temper. His eyes bulged out from their sockets. His whole body was stiff and ready to explode. "Your soft snores knocked down my home. Fix it," his voice had gone very soft and reasonable.

"Fix? Me? I don't know anything about building with sticks."

Pork Chop advanced upon his brother with fire in his eyes, "You better learn how -- and fast!"

Pig raised his hands and backed away from Pork Chop, "Please, Brother, I didn't mean any harm." He tripped over a pile of thatching and fell to his knees. "You could stay with Hamlet. Please don't hurt me." Poor Pig was nearly blubbering.

"Hamlet?" Pork Chop asked stopping his advance.

Pig glanced up, gaining some courage, "Yes, Hamlet. I'm sure he would put us up for a few days."

"Us, Brother?"

Pork Chop looked at his brother and then took in the disaster that had been his home while he considered what Pig had said. Then, "A small untruth? What?"

Pig's brain worked faster than it ever had before. He was a master at conning people but this time was special. This time, his comfort was at stake. Slowly, an evil grin spread itself across his snout. "What if we told him about that terrible, huge hungry wolf that blew down both of our homes? He would have eaten us if we hadn't gotten away as fast as we did."

"What wolf?" asked a puzzled Pork Chop. Then a light came on, "Oh, that wolf." He began grinning as evilly as his younger brother. "We ran so very fast to get away from him, didn't we? How could our oldest brother turn down our plea for help?"

"If it means a place to live, food in my belly and someone to take care of me, yes."

"Good. Let's talk on our way to Hamlet's. We need to begin with the bare facts and build on them as we go."

Pork Chop nodded and the two set off down the road, concocting a story out of whole cloth.

Three hours later, their story set, the two came into sight of their oldest brother's home. The house was a solid ranch style made of red

brick with a picket fence all around the yard. White trim surrounded the windows, and the door was made of heavy oak.

The two conspirators took a deep breath and opened the gate. Pork Chop carefully closed the gate before following Pig up the cobblestone walk to the front door. With a look at Pork Chop, the younger Pig knocked on the door.

"Just a minute," came a voice from inside.

A few moments later, Hamlet opened the door to his home. "Why brothers, what brings you here today?"

"Oh, Hamlet. Something terrible has happened," Pig began.

"A horrible wolf blew down our houses and tried to eat us," Pork Chop chimed in. "We had no one else to go to."

"A wolf? Blew down your homes?" Hamlet asked stunned. "How could he do that? What building materials did you use?"

Pig reached for his oldest brother, crying on his shoulder, "Could we talk about this inside? We had to run for a long ways. We're afraid that he may have followed us all the way here." He looked fearfully over his shoulder.

"Please, Hamlet," Pork Chop shivered, "we really need to get where we'll be safe." He, too, fearfully scanned the road toward his old home.

"Of course. Come in," he stood aside so they could enter the house.

The two younger swine pushed past their brother and Hamlet shut and locked the door behind them. Leading them into the livingroom, Hamlet motioned them to sit on the sofa. After making sure they were comfortable, Hamlet asked them what he could do.

"Dear Brother, we knew we could count on you," Pig said as he settled himself deeper into the sofa. "Could I possibly have a drink of cool water? My throat is so dry from all the running I've done."

"Of course," Hamlet went into the kitchen at the back of the house.

"We're in!" Pork Chop crowed.

"Not so loud," Pig hushed him, "Do you want Ham to hear us? If he finds out what we've done, he'll throw us out on our backsides."

"Sorry, Pig. What happens next?"

"You ask if we could spend the night."

Pork nodded then settled back just as Hamlet reentered the room with the water for Pig. "Here you are, Brother."

"Thank you." Pig emptied the glass in half a second.

"Hamlet?" Pork asked softly.

"Yes, Pork Chop?"

After a moment's silence, Hamlet asked, "Would what be possible, Pork?"

Swallowing noiseily, Pork Chop continued, "Maybe we could stay here for the night? We really are scared of going outside until we're positive that the wolf didn't follow us all the way here."

"Of course the two of you are staying for the night. You can stay here until we can get your homes rebuilt and find that wolf that caused you so much trouble."

"Find the wolf?" Pork Chop asked in a small voice.

"We can't let him get away with forcing pigs out of their homes and scaring them nearly to death," Hamlet asserted.

"There's one small problem with that, Hamlet," Pig said.

"What?"

"We didn't see him. I woke up and my home was down around my ears."

"Yes," Pork Chop nodded vigorously. "The same for me. Us. Pig was with me when the wolf came after me. We were sound asleep and then the house came down and we smelled wolf, so we ran."

"This does make it more difficult," Hamlet mused. After a moment, he continued, "We'll just have to round up all the wolves in the area and you two will have to identify him by his scent."

"I'm not sure that I can do that. I have allergies, you know, and only got the barest whiff of him," Pig said.

"He's going to ruin everything," Pig muttered and then followed his brothers into the hall.

"Poor Pork Chop," Hamlet soothed when the middle brother finally stopped, cowering in a corner. "If he scares you that much, we'll have to find another way."

"I couldn't ID him by his smell, Ham, they all smell alike to me," Pork Chop whispered. "And I'm so scared. What if he does something to us?"

"I won't let anyone do anything to my brothers, Pork. Now, let's get the two of you something to eat and then into bed."

The two younger swine shared a look of delight and allowed Hamlet to lead them into the kitchen. They sat at the table while Hamlet busied himself at the stove. There was a large pot of boiling water and a platter of corn ready to go into it. "I hope you two are hungry. I've a salad ready in the icebox and there's a fresh loaf of bread and sweet cream butter."

Hamlet put the corn in the pot and sat the table. "I even have a chocolate cake for dessert."

The swine never did find the "wolf" that "blew down" their homes, he didn't exist.

Hamlet added two bedrooms to his home and cared for his two lying brothers for the rest of his days.

Pig and Pork Chop were content to let Hamlet care for them and the two carried the lie of the wolf who blew down houses to their graves.

And that, my dear little wolflets, is the true story of The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf.

"What nasty pigs, Mama."

"I would never do anything like that," Wolf vowed. Then with a golden gleam in his eyes, he added, "Mama, I'm hungry. Can I have a bacon sandwich?"

"In the morning, dear. Now is the time for sleeping. Good night, children."

"Night, Mama."

"Night, Mama. Don't forget the bacon," Wolf called as he and his siblings trotted off to bed.

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